



## The Vajra Words Unveiled

### A Commentary on the Düsüm Sangyé Prayer to the Guru

by *Kyapjé Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö*

*Lotus-Born, Exalted Lotus,  
Lotus King, to you I bow—  
dakinis, please grant permission  
To unveil these vajra words!*

The *Düsüm Sangyé* prayer can be explained according to three types of meanings:

1. The outer, literal meaning,
2. The inner, hidden meaning,
3. The secret, ultimate meaning.

#### ***1. The Outer, Literal Meaning***

The explanation of this prayer, beginning with “Embodiment of buddhas of past, present and future, Guru Rinpoche” (*dü sum sangyé guru rinpoché*), is as follows. At the beginning of time, when there were neither sentient beings nor buddhas, there was the teacher, dharmakaya Samantabhadra, the forebear of samsara and nirvana. By his blessing arose the five sambhogakaya families, and from them infinitely vast cloud-banks of pure lands, such as Ghanavyuha. Then, the supreme peaceful and wrathful nirmanakaya emanations, the vidyadharas, viras and yoginis appeared in infinite forms to teach disciples according to their capacities, whether inferior or superior.

As the Guru’s vajra words proclaim: “Self-manifested Padma’—this is what I am called...”<sup>1</sup> One of his infinite emanations appeared in, of the four continents of the world, our Jambu continent.<sup>2</sup> To the west of the Vajra Seat at Jambu’s center lies Uddiyana, which is Apabhramsha for “the land of the sky dancers.” And it was upon the Sindhu Ocean to the northwest of Uddiyana (corrupted to “Orgyen”) that this great master took miraculous birth.

Among the inconceivable number of deeds in his liberating life-stories, most importantly the Guru undertook an infinite variety of beneficial deeds for the sake of the teachings and beings in Tibet, the land of snows. Upon one such occasion, the Guru bestowed upon his principal disciples, especially the Dharma

King and his heirs, this prayer of vajra words, the very sound of the dharmata. The meaning of this prayer may be explained as follows.

The Guru encompasses the complete abandonment and realization of all the **buddhas** (*sangyé*) who have come, will come, and presently reside in the **three times** (*dü sum*) of past, present and future. He is a manifestation of every one of these tathagatas who have perfected the twofold benefit, and he embodies their blessings. This **precious master** (*guru rinpoché*) from Uddiyana, then, is equal in qualities to a mighty king who fulfils all wishes. He has the power to effortlessly grant **all** the excellent supreme and ordinary **siddhis** (*ngödrub kün*) for the sake of this life and the next. Thus, the Guru is a **lord** (*dak*) whose glory is universal among all the beings within existence and peace, and his power to bestow siddhis upon those with faith, devotion, and good fortune, is unequalled.

Of the infinite names by which he is known throughout all the various realms, outwardly he is primarily Padmasambhava, the great guru of Uddiyana. Inwardly, since the Guru has transcended all defiled phenomena and completely overcome all forms of attachment within the three realms of existence, he has attained complete mastery over the kingdom of unsurpassable, unified **great bliss** (*dewa chenpö*). The Guru is therefore superior to all ordinary beings, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas, and his realization is one with all the tathagatas. At the **feet** (*shab*) of such a being, we prostrate with devotion.

Secretly, he **dispels all** the **obstacles** (*barché kün sel*), whether they be: on the outer level, the eight or sixteen dangers; on the inner level, the concepts related to the five poisons, and the destructive diseases and evil spirits they give rise to; or, on the secret level, the blockages of the channels, winds and bindus. The Guru, in **defeating** our enemies, the four **maras** (*düdul*), is totally courageous; he is a **Mighty Wrathful King** (*drakpo tsal*), majestic in his victory upon every front. Although the Guru does not waver from peace, out of his compassion he appears to intractable beings as extremely wrathful, an embodiment of the force and strength of all the wrathful kings.

With all our heart **we pray** (*solwa deb so*) to the Guru, the great master of Uddiyana: “With your awakened vajra body, speech, and mind, **inspire us with your blessing** (*jingyi lab tu sol*); ripen and liberate our minds! **Pacify** all the aforementioned **outer, inner, and secret obstacles** (*chi nang sangwé barché shyiwa dang*) towards accomplishing enlightenment, without exception! Without resorting to strenuous effort and upon our merest wish, may all of **our aspirations** (*sampa*), particularly those that accord with the Dharma—all that is meaningful in this life and the next—**be spontaneously fulfilled** (*lhün gyi drubpar jingyi lob*), as naturally and easily as rivers flowing into the sea!” Thus, we invoke the Guru’s sacred vow by means of our prayer.

## 2. The Inner, Hidden Meaning

The **three times** (*dü sum*) refers to the inner structure of the physical vajra body. *Past* refers to the heating and diminishing, or setting, of the essential constituents<sup>3</sup> caused by the solar winds. These course through the red *rasana* channel on the right side, one of the three principal channels. Thus, *past* indicates the setting or extinguishing of the spoiled solar [wind]. *Present* refers to the growth of the essential constituents, or the soothing and cooling of their coarse aspects, caused by the lunar winds which course through the white *lalana* channel on the left side. Thus, *present* indicates the settling and growth of the lunar aspect, which gives rise to bliss.<sup>4</sup> In *rabu*, the central *avadhuti* channel, the wisdom winds flow. *Future* means when the wind-dependent mind and the bindus have entered *rabu*, and the solar and lunar winds have thereby been consumed, so that great, non-conceptual wisdom takes birth within one's being.

Furthermore, the pure white element [of the physical vajra body] is the awakened vajra body of the buddhas, the red element is awakened vajra speech, and non-conceptuality is awakened vajra mind. These are the primordially, naturally pure **buddha** (*sangyé*), the **precious master** (*guru rinpoché*), who is heavy with all the enlightened qualities and who transcends all that is to be attained or abandoned. At such a [primordial] time, this great being intrinsically abides beyond increase or decrease, transference or change.

At the time of the path, one applies the key instructions to the physical vajra body, consisting of the channels and the winds and bindus that course within them. All the qualities of the paths and bhumis are thereby produced and perfected instantaneously. Moreover, these qualities being primordially and spontaneously perfected, without needing to be sought anywhere else, is **precious** (*rinpoché*). The **master of all** supreme and common **siddhis** (*ngödrub kün dak*) is **great bliss** (*dewa chenpo*) [which is produced as follows]. Below the navel resides the essence of the red element, or inner heat (*candali*), in the form of an 'a'-stroke (ྐ) which has the nature of fire. At the crown resides the essence of the white element in the form the *hañ* syllable (ཨ) which has the nature of lunar nectar.<sup>5</sup> Through igniting the blissful warmth of blazing and dripping, a sublime and immutable great bliss pervades the entire body and mind with melting pleasure. Illustrative wisdom is thereby born within one's being, and through gradually perfecting habituation to this, the ultimate wisdom (that which is to be illustrated) forcefully arises within one's being.

When practicing in this way, the hindrances and **obstacles** (*barché*) that disturb the channels, winds, and bindus are **all dispelled** (*kiin sel*), and the crooked **demons** of the fiery winds within the *lalana* and *rasana* are **conquered** (*dü dul*). While one is applying these forceful yogic exercises to the physical vajra body and thus allowing the body's channels to be naturally purified: physically practice flowing, soaring, exhausting, and dropping; verbally practice the long and short "há" as well as the drawing of the *hum*; and apply the key points mentally.

Purifying the winds in this way brings thoughts forcefully to a halt within the *avadhuti* channel.

By becoming accustomed to this training, body, speech, and mind will ripen into the three self-existing vajras. This city of the physical vajra body embodies the outer, inner, and secret Guru, which in *Hevajra* is referred to as “great wisdom,” and in *The Magical Net [of Vajrasattva]: Mirror [of All Secrets]* as “the indestructible bindu.” The entire mandala of deities of the outer practice of the Barché Künsel are physically present and are generated as such. This is the explanation according to the generation stage of Mahayoga. The mandala of the inner practice of Dewa Chenpo and Sampa Lhündrup are present as the channels and bindus. This is the explanation according to Anuyoga. The secret practice, the self-existing wrath of Dorjé Drakpo Tsal, arises as the mandala of the innate dharmata indivisible from awareness. This is the explanation according to the Atiyoga. In this section my intention has been to explain the generation phase practices according to three yogas and link them with the hidden meaning of the perfection phase.

### 3. *The Secret, Ultimate Meaning*

The **three times** (*dü sum*) applies to the body, speech and mind. The past is reflected in the momentariness of the body, which is subject to birth and death. The present is reflected in speech—the inhalation and exhalation of air—based upon which the body and mind remain. The mind produces the proliferation of future dualistic thoughts and samsara. Their relative importance is thus taught.

In the fourth time transcending these **three times** (*dü sum*), the time of equality, resides the lord of the original ground, the glorious self-existing **buddha** (*sangyé*), the forefather of all the tathagatas: **Guru** (*guru*) Samantabhadra. He is all-pervasive, unobstructed and unobscured, the universal embodiment of the wisdom of dharmadhatu, for he pervades all of samsara and nirvana and transcends all attributes; of mirror-like wisdom, for his verbal clarity illuminates all phenomena of samsara and nirvana; equality, for existence and peace are for him of a single taste; and the great wisdom of discernment, for he distinguishes all phenomena. Originally and naturally pure, his qualities complete from the very beginning, he is **precious** (*rimpoché*).

Siddhis, meaning **attainments** (*ngö drup*), refers to the Guru’s all-accomplishing wisdom, and implies that this **great being** (*kun dak*) brings total and complete benefit to all sentient beings within existence and peace. The king of self-knowing awareness, the teacher Unchanging Light, is endowed with the supreme of all aspects. He abides within the expanse of the single sphere, the perfection of samsara and nirvana, as perpetual **great bliss** (*dewa chenpo*). Thus, the Great Perfection tantra *The Revelation of Bodhicitta: Perfect, Pure Reality*, refers to him as “self-existing, the dharmata.”

At the time of the path, the mind's obscurations lessen due to the pith-instructions of the guru and the awakening of one's own karmic propensities. Then, naked awareness can be introduced directly and decided upon, bringing confidence in the great natural liberation.<sup>6</sup> By applying these three key statements, all the qualities of the three kayas and the pure visions of path will increase, be perfected and absorbed within all-encompassing space. As they dissolve into great inner luminosity, you capture the citadel of limpid and subtle, great luminous wisdom within the sphere of precious, spontaneous accomplishment.<sup>7</sup> When you gain the realization, experience, and confidence of the dharmata, you conquer the enemy of ignorantly holding to eternalism and nihilism, and destroy the foundation of the three realms of existence. Here, the reference to the enemy of **maras** (*dü*) means that the maras are **tamed** (*dul*) from within, and thoughts, the basis for dualistic grasping, are defeated by awareness. This vajra of awareness, fierce and ferocious, is the innate yidam **Mighty Wrathful King** (*drakpo tsal*). You thus attain the supreme level of a fully awakened heruka, a teacher youthful, brave, and powerful. This sacred fruition is referred to in the tantra, *The Perfect Profundity of Primal Wisdom* as "primordially present." The first three lines of this prayer can also be explained respectively according to the mind section (*sem dé*), the space section (*long dé*) and the pith-instruction section (*mengak dé*).<sup>8</sup> Explained generally and according to their literal meaning, the remaining three lines of the prayer can refer to realizations upon the paths of the latter two,<sup>9</sup> an invocation of the Guru's  **blessings** (*jin gyi lab*) [to attain these], and a request for these **siddhis** (*ngödrub*). So concludes the main explanation of the prayer, according to the general, hidden, and ultimate meanings.

Now, what follows is an explanation according to the sacred syllables:<sup>10</sup> The prayer's first line represents the syllable 'é', the element of space, which appears triangular in shape and symbolizes the space of the vajra-queen. This is the mother who gives birth to all the victors, in other words, the **Guru** (guru). The second line represents the syllable 'vam', the element of water, which is in the shape of a vajra. It appears as the father or means which gives birth to **great bliss** (*dewa chenpo*). The third line represents the syllable 'ma', the fire element, the **tamer of** the hordes of **demons** (*dü dul*)—the male or female maras, yamas, mamos, rakshasas, bhutas, and asuras. The great wrathful heruka **Mighty Wrathful King** (*dorjé drakpo tsal*) is prior to the syllable 'ma', and he tramples upon the hosts of arrogant spirits in extreme fury. The fourth line onwards represents the syllable 'ya', the increase of the wind element, which gives rise to and gathers the qualities of the paths and bhumis. Thus, this shows how one attains the sacred level of mastery—a king of the dharma, for whom the twofold benefit is spontaneously accomplished.

If you thus recite this prayer one-pointedly, blessings will soon suffuse your whole being, for the compassion of Master Padmakara is swift. As he has proclaimed:<sup>11</sup>

Seeing me, all the buddhas are seen,

Accomplishing my practice, the practice of all the buddhas is  
accomplished,  
For I am the embodiment of all the sugatas.

And:

I shall come, unable to resist,  
When with devotion and strong, fervent prayers  
You pray to me, the Lotus-Born of Uddiyana.  
I will come to you.

Likewise, the colophon to the third chapter of *The Prayer in Seven Chapters*,  
called *The Prayer Requested by Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal*,<sup>12</sup> explains how such prayer  
will fulfill the needs and wishes of all beings.

*I, Pema Yeshe Dorje,  
Wrote this short explanation  
As soon as it came to my mind  
On the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of the Water Bird year.*<sup>13</sup>



### Translation Origin

Translated by [Samye Translations](#), 2021 (trans. Peter Woods and Stefan Mang).

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#### *Tibetan Source*

'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros. “gu ru'i gsol 'debs dus gsum sangs rgyas kyi 'grel pa rdo rje'i tshig gi sbas 'byed/” in *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros kyi gsung 'bum*. 12 vols. Bir: Khyentse Labrang, 2012. WIKG12986. Vol. 9: 129–139.

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1 The quotation in full can be found at the beginning of Kyabjé Dūdjom Rinpoche's *The Concise Benefits of the Festival of the Tenth Day*. According to Dūdjom Rinpoche this quotation stems from the root tantra of *The Guru as the Embodiment of Realization (Lama Gongdü)*, entitled *The Pile of Lotus Stems*. The same quotation is also found in Mipham Rinpoche's *White Lotus* (see: Mipham Rinpoche 2015, p. 28).

2 Following the traditional model according to which four continents surround the cosmic Mount Meru.

3 Essential constituent (*khams*) is another term for the bindu (*thig le*), see: Mipham Rinpoche 2015, p. 100, n. 72.

4 Here a parallel is drawn between the outer course of the sun and the moon, and the inner course of the winds within the body. The translation of the initial passage of this section follows Padmakara's translation of a very similar explanation by Mipham Rinpoche. See: Mipham Rinpoche 2015, p. 59. For a further discussion of the circulation of the winds, see: The explanation of the Secret Empowerment in Jamgön Kongtrul 2017. See also Jamgön Kongtrul 2005, p. 179 and notes.

5 Jokyab Rinpoche (Jamgön Kongtrul 2017, endnote 52) describes the *hañ* syllable, which means supreme bliss, as having a fourfold nature: 1) white like the autumn moon; 2) bright like a lamp burning sesame oil; 3) round like a bird's egg; and 4) on the verge of melting like mercury. Jamgön Kongtrul mentions that, rather than the syllable, one can also simply visualize a bindu with similar characteristics.

6 *The Three Statements that Strike the Vital Point* outlined by Garab Dorjé.

7 A reference to the final accomplishment of Atiyoga practice, the exhaustion of all phenomena into dharmata.

8 That is, the three categories of Atiyoga.

9 That is, the space section and the pith-instruction section.

10 What follows is an explanation of the famous line "*evam maya shrutam*" ("Thus have I heard") which is found as an introduction to most sutras and tantras. According to the tantric teachings, each of the syllables (*e-vam ma-ya*) has a deeper layer of meaning, which is shown here.

11 Jamyang Khyentse cites only the opening words of this and the following quotation; for the sake of clarity both are given here in full. Both quotations appear to be from *The Secret Guide to Accomplishing the Guru (bla ma sgrub pa'i gsang them gnad yig)* (see also: Mipham Rinpoche 2015, p. 37–38).

12 The colophon to *The Prayer Requested by Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal* reads: "Pray like this; pray with devotion! For me, Padmakara, there is nothing apart from benefiting beings. Through the force of the samaya link, I shall return to the land of Tibet. To those who have faith, I shall actually grant prophecies directly. As regards this prayer, first of all when you recount its story, you will be filled with inspiration. When you see its precious qualities, deep faith will be born within you. When that faith becomes unshakeable trust and devotion, then my blessing will enter and transform you. When your mind is free of all doubts, whatever you wish can be achieved."

13 That is, Tuesday 15 August, 1933.